

# The Problem of Colonialism

## Assimilation, Difference, and Decolonial Theory in Africa

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**ABSTRACT** This article explores the ways in which Latin American decolonial theory is drawn on to make sense of colonial legacies in contemporary Africa. For Latin American decolonial theory, colonialism is characterized by enforced assimilation enacted through epistemic violence. Latin American decolonial theory self-consciously rejects thinking about colonialism as historically specific in favor of the more abstract concept of coloniality. When Latin American decolonial theory travels to Africa, its emphasis on colonial assimilation obscures a significant experience of colonialism that enforced difference rather than assimilation. The article discusses the key underpinnings of apartheid education as a form of colonial education, in order to show how colonialism was responsive to particular conditions and combined both epistemology and institutions. To think the problem of colonialism in the present requires a comparative account of the problem of colonialism that embraces both the history of assimilation and the history of difference in a way that survives colonial assimilation.

**KEYWORDS** decoloniality, Africa, colonialism, education, difference

In March 2015, student protests erupted at a prominent, formerly whites-only university in South Africa; they focused on the removal of a statue of Cecil John Rhodes from its magisterial position on the campus. The moment and the movement quickly spread to other campuses across the country, finding resonance in other parts of the world as well.<sup>1</sup> While South Africa had formally ended apartheid in 1994, the targeting of the Rhodes statue signaled that for this generation of students the end of apartheid did not mean the end of colonialism. Colonialism as a problem in society and in the university was identified as an ongoing one and therefore necessitated anticolonial political intervention to decolonize knowledge in the university. If earlier critical moments in the university found succor variously in Marxist thought, African anticolonial thought, and postcolonial theory,

this moment has enabled some to introduce into the South African debates “decolonial theory,” a particular school of intellectual critique that initially emerged from scholars in Latin America and its diasporas. Both the Latin American and the African movements referred to here—such as the African Decolonial Research Network (ADERN) or work of scholars associated with the theoretical program called Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality (MCD) in Latin America—shared a concern with what this article describes as “the problem of colonialism,” expressed in this particular instance as the wish to undo the legacy of colonial education. The emphasis on “the problem of colonialism” here is a way in which to draw attention to how calls for the decolonization of knowledge interpret the problem that is the target for these political interventions.

“The problem of colonialism,” as it registers in theoretical and political discourses of critique emerging from Africa, is influenced by this particular Latin American conception of colonialism. This theorization by Latin American decolonial theorists—also taken up by some scholars in Africa—puts an emphasis on assimilation as the essential feature of colonial epistemic violence. Colonial assimilation sought to refashion the colonized subject in the image of European man in consciousness, comportment, conduct, and aesthetics. However, the period of late colonialism in Africa roughly from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century leaves a legacy in which the problem of colonialism for large swaths of the African continent is less about enforced cultural assimilation and more about enforced cultural difference.<sup>2</sup> If we are to decolonize knowledge, we must recognize the assimilationist aspects of that inheritance as much as the contemporary legacy of colonial conceptions of difference. If the problem of colonialism is identified only as assimilation, then the answer is likely to ignore how colonial rule relied on difference. If we recognize both experiences—assimilation and difference—as markers of the problem of colonialism in the present, then the work of decolonization will also have to attend to the predicament of how to decolonize difference without giving up on the importance of difference itself in refashioning political futures.

Keeping in mind the relationship between the problem of colonialism—our *contemporary* challenge—and the problem facing colonialism—the *historical* challenge for colonial rule—is a helpful way to guide the discussion. If we look at colonialism from the vantage point of the problem *facing* colonialism, we arrive at a more historicized account of the legacy of colonialism as a plural inheritance. By the “problem facing colonialism,” I refer to the specific predicaments that colonial rulers and administrators struggled against, often produced by political resistance they faced, in different parts of the world at different moments in time. These problems produced and institutionally distinct understandings of the colonial subject. The formative ideas about the education of the Native subject under apartheid

education policy are engaged here to elaborate this point. If an anticolonial project in education is directed toward undoing the legacy of colonial education, is that legacy the same across different geohistorical experiences? And if those legacies are different, what does it mean for anticolonial projects concerned with colonial legacies of both assimilation and difference in the present in education?

This article takes up these concerns by looking at how a particular school of decolonial theory travels to, and is translated into, the South African debates, particularly those produced in the wake of Rhodes Must Fall, about what the colonial legacy of apartheid education is. The first part outlines an account of the Latin American decolonial school, with an emphasis on the arguments that its main theorists offer. It then elaborates two concepts in decolonial theory most salient to the current African context: the concept of “coloniality,” and its approach to thinking about race. The second part of the article then reads these arguments in relation to the education of colonized subjects under apartheid and concludes with an argument for comparative accounts of colonial legacies in the present.

I should clarify, at the outset, what this article is not motivated by. The intention here is neither to offer a comprehensive account of the student movements nor to map the diverse range of intellectual influences and thinkers that these movements engaged with under the banner of Rhodes Must Fall.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, while the article does situate the Latin American colonial experience in a relationship to colonial experiences in Africa, it is not an attempt to provide a comparative empirical or historical study of these experiences as such. It gestures toward the importance of doing that kind of work, but its concerns are more circumscribed; it is interested in how the account of a particular school of Latin American theory defines the problem of colonialism and is deployed to do critical work in some current interventions in the South African university after apartheid and what the possible consequences are of that. Thirdly, there are a number of diverse, critical-intellectual and political interventions in Latin America that march under the banner of decolonial theory. They do not always agree with each other, as is the case with any school of thought. The school of thought considered most influential and those individual theorists who are most cited in the African turn to decolonial theory are the focus here. And lastly, the argument is not that decolonial theorizations are wrong, even though they may be. It is that this particular brand of Latin American decolonial theory is *limited* in its understanding of the problem of colonialism and should therefore not be universalized as the way to theorize the problem of colonialism. By describing the problem of colonialism in large parts of Africa through the experience of apartheid education, the article underscores that difference.

The article then thinks about critical-political interventions of movements and thought as situated “conjuncturally,” meaning that interventions are particular to specific political conjunctures. This formulation of how to think the conceptual

and political genealogy of the colonial modern is drawn from the British historian R. G. Collingwood and interpreted in contemporary criticism by the Jamaican anthropologist David Scott.<sup>4</sup> To paraphrase Scott's rendition of "the question-answer complex," I ask, What question or predicament was and is this version of decoloniality an answer to? A question nested inside this one is, Why has this way of thinking about the problem of colonialism had greater appeal in this conjuncture? And more so, say, than other traditions of critical thought on power, race, and colonialism, such as Marxism and postcolonial theory? Interventions emerge in and out of specific political-intellectual conjunctures, but they travel and are translated in lively and productive ways. As Edward Said points out, theory travels;<sup>5</sup> the challenge is to hold on to the specificity of its initial interventions, defined by geography and history, while we simultaneously put it to work in other places, at other times, for different uses. This requires a relation to theory that eschews being mimetic and instead reworks it to offer an intervention into a debate that is self-conscious of its current problem. This self-consciousness entails showing the contours of the difference between one's current problem and the initial problem in response to which the theoretical intervention (like Latin American decoloniality) was developed and from which it derived its original "charge."<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, the argument put forward here reflects on the conditions of possibility for the reception of this particular Latin American school of thought on decoloniality in Africa and problematizes this turn on historical and geographical grounds. The article historicizes the turn to decoloniality, a gesture undertaken here as an act of solidarity grounded in the shared concern with the problem of colonialism.

### **The Latin American Decolonial School**

As a critical intellectual current, "the decolonial school" cannot be assumed to be internally homogenous or singular. There are internal points of disagreement. One of the main points of contention appears to be its origin: a distinction between decolonial scholarship located in Latin America and decolonial scholarship produced by those in its diaspora. In one origin story, such as Ramón Grosfoguel's, decolonial theory largely emerged in Latin America in the wake of the end of the Cold War and in relation to critiques both of Marxism and of modernization theories of development.<sup>7</sup> In another origin story from some scholars located in Latin America, decolonial theory started in Latin America but was made global by some members of the Latin American diaspora who made headway in the North American academy, particularly in the United States.<sup>8</sup> In the view of some of the Latin America-based critics, earlier decolonial theorizations developed in Latin America but taken up by US-based scholars of the Latin American diaspora were given a

powerful platform and traction in other parts of the world influenced by North American circuits of knowledge. According to some of these Latin American critics, such as the well-known sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, there are important ethical questions to be asked of some of the North America-based scholars of decolonial theory, as well as questions about the political economy of knowledge that has enabled their global audience.<sup>9</sup> For these critics, the location of these scholars in the United States rather than more peripheral university locations of the Global South has contributed to their global circulation and visibility in a world in which knowledge often circulates asymmetrically. There are also questions of why those scholars theorizing from Latin American locations, often in vernacular and Romance languages, have been ignored.

These differences in the origin story of how decolonial theory emerged, and why it enjoys a global reach at the moment, are not unimportant debates among Latin American scholars. If theory is to be considered as an intervention with specific geographic and temporal markers, then decolonial theory should also be considered as a diverse set of theoretical-political currents of thought, with differences and debates internal to it as a theoretical formation. What these differences signal is that decolonial theory as we might know it when it travels is but one, albeit dominant, version of currents of thought that emerge out of debates in Latin America. What scholars might agree on, though, within their differences is that decolonial theory emerges out of a sense that both liberal and Marxist formulations of modernization and development, which were so critical to the leftist debates of the 1960s through the late 1980s, were translated inadequately and in problematic ways as state projects. These state-led development interventions enacted somatic and epistemic violence against alternative and particularly Indigenous visions of organizing society.<sup>10</sup> It is not entirely clear, although beyond the remit of this article, whether this offers a persuasive argument that there is an inherent problem in theoretical Marxism itself, rather than signaling an inadequacy in the translation of theoretical visions into actual political projects. While we should acknowledge that decolonial theory might have two streams—one that did not travel and one that did—the concern of this article is to consider the decolonial theory that has traveled most and is encountered and put to work in Africa. In this sense, we are concerned with the version that is primarily drawn from the work of scholars writing from the academy in the United States.

### Coloniality

Two key arguments and concepts in the decolonial school of thinkers have been particularly resonant for scholars who have found decolonial theory most productive in Africa. The first has to do with how to theorize colonialism, as coloniality, and

the second has to do with how to theorize race as a zone of “being and nonbeing,” both of which are elaborated on as arguments below. Viewed as a central intervention of decolonial theory—according to one of its most prolific proponents, the Argentine scholar Walter Mignolo—is the distinction between “colonialism” and “coloniality,” on the one hand, and consequently between “decolonization” and “decoloniality,” on the other. Ascribing this distinction to the senior scholar among the group, the Peruvian intellectual Aníbal Quijano, Mignolo describes the importance of this argument as such:

First, and given this distinctive theoretical frame grounded on the colonial history of the Americas and subsequently of the world, Quijano proposed that the decolonial task (he was still using the term decolonization at that time but the meaning was what today we understand by decoloniality) consists in epistemic reconstitution. He meant that on the one hand there is a civilizational rhetoric (in the sense of persuasive discourses) of salvation being the West (West of Jerusalem, former Western Europe and the US), the savior and the rest in need of salvation. Salvation has several designs, all co-existing today, but that unfolded over 500 years, since 1500: salvation by conversion to Christianity, salvation by progress and civilization, salvation by development and modernization, salvation by global market democracy (e.g. neoliberalism). Thus, the rhetoric of modernity is the constant updating of the rhetoric of salvation hiding the logic of coloniality—war, destruction, racism, sexism, inequalities, injustice, etc. All the “bad” things people notice today in the world cannot be changed to improve while modernity/coloniality remain in place.<sup>11</sup>

Important in this argument is the distinction between colonialism and coloniality. Colonialism is of limited valence, Mignolo argues, because as a concept it suggests that colonialism was a historically specific moment—an event—while coloniality refers to an ongoing epistemic and ontological order that endures after the formal end of colonialism in Latin America. Here there are resonances with another group of scholars working on the concept of settler colonialism from a different geohistorical vantage point in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. The Australian scholar Patrick Wolfe has, for example, influentially argued that settler colonialism should be thought of as a structure rather than an event, a structure that either erases the Native subject physically (through genocide, for example) or erases the Native through cultural assimilation.<sup>12</sup> In the latter case, the emphasis is on the erasure, through assimilation, of the Native as an embodiment of historical consciousness. This is most acutely evident in the historical work emerging on early childhood abductions of Aboriginal children subsequently embedded and assimilated into white settler families, known as “the Stolen Generations.”<sup>13</sup>



While the Australian- and New Zealand-based scholars of settler colonialism are interested in specific historical events and processes—such as forced and systematic policies of miscegenation—the decolonial school of Quijano, Mignolo, Grosfoguel, and the Rutgers-based literary and Hispanic studies scholar Nelson Maldonado-Torres is quite explicit in its rejection of a historically specific concept of colonialism. In particular, this decolonial school is opposed to a concept of colonialism that places an emphasis on the political and administrative aspects of colonial rule, on the grounds that this erroneously suggests that colonialism came to an end when formal, colonial political rule ended. In the view of these theorists, if we accept an end date of colonialism then the work of anticolonial politics, and of decolonization, would be redundant. As Grosfoguel puts it, “One of the most powerful myths of the twentieth century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to the decolonization of the world.”<sup>14</sup> Rather, he argues, “with juridico-political decolonization we moved from a period of ‘global colonialism’ to the current period of ‘global coloniality.’”<sup>15</sup>

### **Race as Structure in Thought**

For this decolonial school, epistemic reconstitution rather than the historically specific concept of biological racism is the fundamental problem that structures modernity; such epistemic reconstitution is the continuity through modernity that braids violence and racism. For Grosfoguel, this way of thinking about modernity illuminates contemporary racism in a different way. Racism becomes a structure in thought rather than a specific classification and experience confined to modern biological racism. As Grosfoguel puts it, “Racism is a global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority along the line of the human” that has been politically, culturally, and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the “capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world-system.”<sup>16</sup> As he goes on to argue,

The people classified above the line of the human are recognized socially in their humanity and, thus enjoy access to rights (human rights, civil rights, women’s rights and/or labor rights), material resources, and social recognition of their subjectivities, identities, epistemologies, and spiritualities. The people below the line of the human are considered subhuman or non-human; that is, their humanity is questioned and, as such, negated.<sup>17</sup>

Here Grosfoguel explicitly draws on his interpretation of Frantz Fanon to describe a distinction between a “zone of being” and a zone of “nonbeing”:

Racism is a hierarchy of superiority/inferiority along the line of the human. This hierarchy can be constructed and marked in diverse ways. Westernized elites of the

Third World (African, Asian or Latin American) reproduce racist practices against ethno/racial groups where, depending on the local/colonial history, those considered “inferior” below the line of the human can be defined or marked along religious, ethnic, cultural or color lines.<sup>18</sup>

This formulation of the problem as epistemic rather than institutional, of racism as a more abstracted feature of modernity rather than a historically specific classification, and of the zones of being and nonbeing has been powerfully taken up by Maldonado-Torres in particular and by a number of scholars, particularly of a new generation, in the South African academy. It is to this influence that the next section of the article turns.

### **The Decolonial Turn in Africa**

What were the institutional networks through which Latin American decolonial thinking traveled to South Africa? And what might the appeal of decolonial theory be, particularly to a new generation of scholars and students entering the South African university after the formal end of apartheid? The decolonial turn described here inevitably depends on the institutions, locations, and influence of individual scholars, particularly those who have made important contributions to creating networks for new scholarly communities to emerge. Among the most thoughtful, energetic, and influential of these scholars is Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, a Zimbabwean historian who relocated to South Africa in the midst of the institutional crisis and political constraints produced by the fast-track land reform program launched in 2001 in Zimbabwe. At the time he held a research professor appointment at the University of South Africa, by far the largest distance-learning state university in South Africa.<sup>19</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni participated in annual events organized by Mignolo, Grosfoguel, and others. He subsequently established what is now called the Africa Decolonial Research Network (ADERN), formed in 2011 at the University of South Africa (UNISA). ADERN was established as a network of academics working on decolonial theory.

Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni explains the background:

At UNISA just like in other universities located on the African continent (Universities in Africa rather than African Universities), we were accustomed to consume academic material from the West. There was little awareness of rich local African scholarship and African knowledge production. I found that we needed to shift the geography of knowledge as well as the biography of knowledge. So the first thing we needed to do was to establish who the decolonial thinkers are in Africa, and establish what their contributions have been and still are.<sup>20</sup>



“Initially,” as he narrates it, “ADERN was a small group of researchers from different departments such as Development Studies (where I was based), Political Science, Philosophy, Communication Science, and Criminology at UNISA and also from other universities.” Nvodlu-Gatsheni outlines how a decolonial summer school was established, after he and a few colleagues attended the International Barcelona Summer School on Decolonizing Knowledge and Power organized by Ramon Grosfoguel in 2012. In 2013, Professor Rosemary Moeketsi, executive dean of the College of Human Sciences at UNISA, attended the Barcelona summer school, finding it “so educative and important that she championed the idea of an Annual Decolonial Summer School in UNISA,” enabling more South African scholars and students as well as others from the African continent to undergo training in decoloniality. “The first Decolonial Summer School was organized in 2014 in Pretoria and it has continued since then.”<sup>21</sup>

In order to understand the appeal of Latin American decolonial theory, we must consider the changes underway in the South African academy since 1994 and have a sense of what some of the prevailing critical-theoretical traditions in the university were.<sup>22</sup> In particular, we need to keep in mind the relationship between the historical experience of the deracialization of the universities and the appeal of a turn to decoloniality rather than decolonization. In other words, we would need to take into account questions of epistemology as much as institutional changes. To home in on a particularly relevant part of the institutional story, the experience of a generation entering the university after 1994, in particular at the formerly white liberal universities, was an experience of subtle and alienating forms of racial discrimination that the narrative of the formal end of apartheid in 1994 did not quite square with.<sup>23</sup> This was not only a view of students after 1994; it also describes the experiences of some very senior Black scholars who were hired as faculty in South African universities in which the majority of the teaching staff remained white. The well-known case in South Africa is that of the Ugandan scholar Mahmood Mamdani, who was hired at the University of Cape Town (UCT) as professor of African studies in 1996, and who initiated a public debate on this experience. Another case was that of the late, exiled South African anthropologist Archie Mafeje. He was appointed as a professor at UCT in 1968, but the appointment was rescinded by the apartheid government on racial grounds. This led to some student protests. Mafeje went into exile and had an influential Pan-African intellectual life, based mostly at the American University in Cairo, Egypt. After 1994, he returned from exile, and there was a call by some Black academics at UCT to have Mafeje reinstated, but the process raised a number of questions about the continuities of racial assumptions.<sup>24</sup>

There have been seismic shifts in the demographic identity of the university in South Africa since 1994. In the 1950s, the percentage of Black African students as a proportion of the total number of students in South African higher education was

5.7 percent. In 1983, it had grown to 18.1 percent. And in 1994 it was 47 percent.<sup>25</sup> This number jumped again to 71 percent in 2015.<sup>26</sup> In this same period, between 1994 and the present, the number of students in higher education doubled to just under a million. Yet only 14 percent of the total number of Black African youth are enrolled in higher education.<sup>27</sup>

Indian-descendant and so-called colored South Africans had limited access to apartheid's racially differentiated higher education system. Those referred to in South African parlance as Black African South Africans, the numerical majority of whom were defined along ethnic lines, and who had been deliberately excluded from higher education, were entering a university system. The demographics of the university teaching staff likewise reflected this history of exclusion, with 86 percent of academic staff across universities still listed as white in 2015. When the student revolt happened at UCT in 2015, that university did not have a single Black African female professor on its staff.

These structural changes in the demographic composition of the South African student body have taken place alongside attempts by various academics to transform the content of knowledge in the South African academy. Rather than being institutionalized, such attempts have been uneven and highly heterogeneous, and often met with resistance, as the Mamdani intervention described above indicates.<sup>28</sup> Some have found support from institutional planners and management. Many have found resistance and hostility.<sup>29</sup> Some of the students who have found languages to question the dominant, hegemonic form and content of the university have to some extent been the products of these changes that academics have been experimenting with as early as the 1980s.

What critical currents of thought were available to this generation entering the university, by which to think about their predicaments and the pressures to assimilate into dominant cultural and institutional practices, when most of the students were Black and most of the academics remained white? These predicaments were amplified sociologically by the alienation produced both by the experience inside of the university and by the university's fraught relation to the larger questions of social justice in one of the most unequal societies in the world. For an earlier generation of scholars, concepts and theories had also traveled between Latin America and Africa, as the scholars of "dependency theory" drew on and debated each other's work in important ways.<sup>30</sup> For an earlier generation, South African political-economy debates on the relationship between race and class were most influenced by Western Marxism. In these debates, the emphasis was more often than not on class as the primary logic that animated racial theories and as an ideological justification for procuring a cheap labor supply.<sup>31</sup> Later on, there were also other currents of thought in the South African academy interested in think-

ing about colonialism, knowledge, and race. In a more limited way, partly due to South Africa's cultural isolation from the rest of the African continent, some drew on postindependence African debates at universities like the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, and Makerere University in Uganda. There was more of a turn to thinking about race as part of colonial discourse after the publication of Edward Said's pathbreaking *Orientalism* in 1978 and the British-Caribbean critic Stuart Hall's work on race as a "floating signifier"<sup>32</sup> circulated through South African academic circuits along with journals such as *Race and Class* and *New Left Review*. For some, this turned attention to thinking about colonial discourse as relatively independent of the logics of capital accumulation. It also led to an engagement with theorizations that were rethinking Marxism and class in relation to colonial histories, theorizations inspired in particular by the work of the South Asian subaltern studies collective.<sup>33</sup> Whichever side of the debate one fell on in relation to the race-class exchanges, colonialism as such tended to be understood as a discrete historical moment of a past that had been displaced by the market logics of capital accumulation.

Those who have more recently been drawing from the well of postcolonial theory and those drawing on decolonial theory have turned to alternative theorizations of colonialism in the wake of a feeling that a certain kind of Marxist rendering of colonialism and apartheid that was influential in the academy was no longer adequate to thinking the problem and politics of race, colonialism, and becoming postapartheid. Nor in an existential sense was the experience of the university after apartheid as a culturally alienating space, with its pressures to assimilate into the dominant codes and mores, made legible through the reductive and overdetermining concept of class. There was and is a shared unease about the privileged place political economy held for a previous generation on the continent and the limits of that intellectual tradition's ability to think through ongoing relations of power and difference. This is not to suggest that there is a consensus among this generation to reject Marxism, but it is to suggest that part of the appeal of Latin American decolonial theory for this generation lies in a shared sense, rightly or questionably so, that Marxism continues to be a way of thinking that remains inside of a Western episteme that they wish to step out of.

As Ndlovu-Gatsheni put it,

Marxists dismissed the issue of race just like they dismissed the question of ethnicity as forms of false consciousness. That race was [a] structural constitutive part of colonialism eluded them. When the Soviet Union collapsed, their narrative was pushed to the background. The 1990s witnessed the mushrooming of postcolonial theories, but decolonial theories which are traceable to the very colonial encounters have been refusing

to be totally displaced. No wonder why they have returned to the academy today as part of resisting coloniality. Race was not in the past. It was in the present. The decolonial intervention brought back issues such as knowledge, epistemology, [the] question of humanism, organization of people in racial hierarchies and the invention of colonialism. The idea that knowledge has been colonized transformed us from consumers of knowledge to critics of Eurocentric knowledge.<sup>34</sup>

When Ndlovu-Gatsheni describes the experience of Marxists dismissing race in reductive ways and emphasizing the primacy of class as a heuristic category, he is referring specifically to the dominant traditions of academic Marxism as encountered in the South African academy and to mostly white Marxist scholars, who saw themselves more immersed in the debates of Western Marxism in Europe than in conversation with Marxists on the rest of the African continent.<sup>35</sup>

As Ndlovu-Gatsheni's account suggests, many of the mostly Black students entering the university system found themselves searching for critical resources to make sense of their feeling of marginalization, despite being inside the "elite," formerly white universities like the University of Cape Town or Witwatersrand University. Being told by white academics on the Marxist left that race was not really important, and that focusing on race or colonialism would lead to a reactionary and nationalist identity politics, reinforced an alienation both from their institutions and from Marxism itself.<sup>36</sup> Among this younger generation of Black scholars, there emerged voices who decided that, rather than be conscripted into the restricting binaries of those older debates, they would redefine the debate. Instead of race and class, they asserted the problem as one of colonialism, or more precisely, drawing on the concepts of decolonial theory, the problem of "coloniality."

Among some scholars in the South African academy, the colonial problematic and the limits of the race-class debate were illuminated by encounters with postcolonial theory, particularly as it traveled to South Africa via the important debates in comparative literature and the emergent field of cultural studies. It is important, however, to point out that there was also a self-conscious disavowal of postcolonial theory by the scholars in ADERN. Ndlovu-Gatsheni's rejection of postcolonial theory cites the critique of that current of thought developed by decolonial scholars like Grosfoguel. In a 2011 piece titled "Decolonizing Postcolonial Studies and the Paradigms of Political Economy," Grosfoguel articulated his criticisms of both postcolonial theory (sometimes described in his work with a hyphen as "post-colonial" and sometimes without the hyphen as "postcolonial") and political economy. Grosfoguel's critique centers on the South Asian subaltern studies group, which itself was being translated by a Latin American subaltern studies group. In reflecting on a meeting in 1998 at Duke University between some members of the South Asian subaltern studies group and the Latin American subaltern studies group, he noted

that he felt that subaltern studies was writing on the subaltern but not with a “subaltern perspective.” He claimed that, by contrast, decolonial theorists do have the virtue of offering a subaltern perspective: “With few exceptions they [South Asian subaltern studies] produced studies about the subaltern rather than studies with and from a subaltern perspective. Like the imperial epistemology of Area Studies, theory was still located in the North while the subjects to be studied are located in the South.”<sup>37</sup>

Secondly, Grosfoguel argued that postcolonial theory, due to its reliance on poststructuralist thought, remained within the Western episteme: “By using a Western epistemology and privileging Gramsci and Foucault, they constrained and limited the radicalism of their critique to Eurocentrism. . . . These debates made clear to us the need to decolonize not only Subaltern Studies but also Postcolonial Studies.”<sup>38</sup> He concludes, “The old division between culture and political economy as expressed in postcolonial studies and political economy approaches is overcome in decolonial thinking—In the colonality of power approach, what comes first, culture or the economy, is a false dilemma, a chicken and egg dilemma that obscures the complexity of the capitalist world system.”<sup>39</sup>

This attempt to bring the realm of the cultural and the realm of the economic back together was very productive for decolonial theory. There are, it has to be said, some serious misrepresentations leveled against South Asian subaltern studies and some confusing slippages that Grosfoguel and Maldonado-Torres make that substitute criticisms seemingly directed at postmodernism with criticism of postcolonial theory and of South Asian subaltern studies. A close reading of either of these bodies of critical-theoretical work would suggest that South Asian subaltern studies is not substitutable for postcolonial theory or postmodernism, and vice versa. It could also be said that subaltern studies is a heterogenous collective that emerges in India and has a number of its own internal debates and issues of contention; critics have raised sharp questions about the predominance of Indian scholars at the expense of those elsewhere, such as in Sri Lanka or Pakistan. Its lacunae on questions of gender, Dalit history, and politics, too, have been pointed out. But the concern here is not necessarily to defend or describe debates on or in South Asian subaltern studies or postcolonial theory.

Nor is the aim here to set up a partisan choice between postcolonial theory and decolonial theory. What is at stake here is how we think about the problem of colonialism in the African present. To that extent, if this article is advocating for a disposition, it is one in alignment with the Senegalese philosopher Souleymane Bachir Diagne’s claim: that we should think the problem of colonialism, and chart coordinates of a way out of it, by any theoretical means necessary.<sup>40</sup> This is not, however, to suggest that the criterion for judgment is suspended. Nor is it to embrace a cosmopolitanism in theory that claims to speak for everywhere yet is

from nowhere. Theoretical engagement with the problem of colonialism remains open here to the wellspring of anticolonial resources available in the vast archives of critical traditions of thought that could best help us to think the particular problem of colonialism at hand.

The concept of the “colonial wound” developed by Walter Dignolo provides a persuasive way to hold on to the legacies of colonialism in the present that resonates with the experience of a new generation entering a South African university still in the process of deracializing.<sup>41</sup> The colonial wound as a metaphor has enabled Dignolo to suggest that there is a psychic dimension to the damage wrought by colonialism on colonized subjects, a wound that remains open and therefore requires attending to. The work of reparation, justice, and addressing the intangible ways colonial violence leaves its trace and trauma on colonized subjects is how the appeal of this concept registers. And to that extent a number of scholars based in South Africa have found, and are finding, Latin American decoloniality a very useful banner under which to advance the debate on the decolonization of knowledge.<sup>42</sup>

### **Law and Difference: The Decolonial Limit in Africa**

If the primary experience of Latin American decolonial theory is that of colonial assimilation, there is a limitation in drawing *only* on decoloniality as an approach to thinking the problem of colonialism from Africa. We have noted briefly the historically specific conjuncture out of which decoloniality emerges as a critical intellectual intervention in Latin America and the ways in which the settler-colonial experience in Latin America, Australia, and New Zealand, defined by conquest and assimilation, produces a particular inheritance of colonialism. Along with the older African intellectual debates about nationalism, Marxism, and decolonizing knowledge in the 1960s, both interventions have been drawn on in the South African context as approaches to bring into view the centrality of the colonial project to the formulation of apartheid. These turns are enabling the emergence of a different language on its way to a distinctive idiom through which to think about apartheid as a colonial predicament and South Africa as part of the previously colonized world.

We have identified the sociological condition of a new generation of Black students, historically denied any meaningful access to higher education but now entering the academy and finding it an alienating place. The latter experience is the problem decolonial theorists describe as the one of epistemic violence: the erasure of the colonized subject’s knowledge as knowledge in the first place and the colonial reconstitution and rearrangement of the subject as an object of imperial salvation and intervention to produce the West’s image of itself through the colonized subject. Colonial education in this view is what we find in the South African



academy today because that impulse has not been reconstituted adequately in the aftermaths of the end of apartheid.

The UNISA-based scholar Johannes Seroto offers one such framework for thinking about missionary education in South Africa based on the theoretical insights of Grosfoguel. He draws on the three-dimensional conceptual grid structured by the coloniality of power, the coloniality of knowledge, and the coloniality of being. Seroto points out that “when missionaries came to Africa, they consciously or unconsciously leveled damning accusations at indigenous people who were perceived as inadequate beings who deserved to be developed and civilized by inculcating western knowledges in them.”<sup>43</sup> “Different institutions of learning,” he reminds us, “were used to promote Eurocentric knowledge.”<sup>44</sup> His objective is to “critique education that was provided to indigenous people by the Swiss mission in the former Transvaal” through what he describes as a decolonial lens.<sup>45</sup> He argues that “missionaries used conversion to Christianity to colonise the consciousness and the mind of the indigenous people to accept the European hierarchization of power.”<sup>46</sup> This last phrase—“the European hierarchization of power”—is one of the ten theses on decoloniality offered by Grosfoguel. Seroto cites examples from the thinking of those who formulated and administered the mission education agenda to confirm this argument. For example, in 1902, Rev. H. A. Junod, an eminent missionary-anthropologist of the Swiss mission, wrote that although Indigenous people and colonists were both human, “they were different in terms of character, heredity and mental health.” Seroto notes that religion was used as the marker of social hierarchies.<sup>47</sup>

Seroto’s work is one example of a powerfully articulated critique of colonial education. But it is only a description and critique of a specific moment of the colonial project in South Africa. The refusal to historicize the local or to think of temporality as both chronological and plural tends toward a limited view of what the career of colonial education bequeaths the present. Colonial education is one of the points where the Latin American decolonial project travels into the African context untranslated and reveals the limit of its insights for thinking the problem in the present.

There are broadly two significant moments in the history of colonial education in Africa and in South Africa in particular, most commonly experienced in the British colonies.<sup>48</sup> These two moments correspond to changing rationales behind imperial and colonial policies aimed at ensuring the ultimate goal of colonial government: order among the Natives that would continue to secure colonial rule. The first moment is, then, that of assimilation. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European missionary education took charge of education in a regional and decentralized way to do civilizing and salvation work. This was also the period when tribal political formations encountered by settlers as they

moved into the hinterlands from the coastal ports of entry were being pacified through treaties and later destroyed through war when Native resistance manifested. These wars of conquest enabled ownership of the land and control of the bodies on the land.

Law legitimated settler-colonial conquest, and it also provided the framework for the administration of the bodies on the land, now parceled up into settler-owned farms. Wars of conquest defeated the political sovereignty of ethnic formations rather than completely eradicating the populations or existing forms of political authority as such. The point was to bring the political authorities under which the African populations lived under submission rather than to totally destroy the populations or their cultural and political forms of life. The aim was to produce submission to the authority of the colonial state as the condition of continued existence for populations still under the rule of what the colonial state would refashion and codify as “tribal” forms of authority. Among the most protracted was the hundred-year-long series of wars to defeat the Xhosa chieftaincies in the Eastern Cape. In the aftermath, the colonial state imposed various taxes, a technique of subjugation that also forced many of the young Xhosa men to migrate to the newly emerging cities and commercial farms. By 1913, a land act was passed, which allocated 86 percent of the population a mere 13 percent of the land. The Native was now increasingly a migrant in the land of his or her birth. But by 1912 the Africans who had been through mission education—some of them, like the intellectual figure Solomon T. Plaatje, sons of chiefs—became part of a nascent, educated, urban African elite: journalists, lawyers, medical doctors, and clergy. From their ranks emerged those who began to petition the British Empire for the promised but delayed universal rights of man promised to them.<sup>49</sup> If education and Christianity had taught them that they were entitled to equality, they politely asked, why was that equality being denied them? It was in fact the imperial mining magnate Cecil John Rhodes who at that time was a proponent of the idea of the “franchise for civilized men” at the Cape: the idea that Black Africans with a certain kind of education and a certain level of property ownership could have the right of political representation. In effect this was a policy of exchanging cultural assimilation for the right to political representation—the logic of liberal trusteeship.

But crucially, there was a turning point in the policy: the second moment of significance in colonial education. This had to do with shifts in Native life and conflicts in the settler community. Among white South Africans, there are struggles between British and Dutch descendants for dominance. The formation of associations by the Africans who are the products of missionary education, such as the formation of the forerunner to the African National Congress, the South African Native National Congress, in 1912, cast a worrying pall over settler politics. The liberal tradition of white South African politics established its difference

from Afrikaner nationalists over whether the Native could and should be assimilated into European culture and Western ways. The liberal tradition held on to the idea of trusteeship and paternalism. But the increasingly dominant Afrikaner nationalists had a different conception of the people, the *volk*, and of difference. The leading theorist of apartheid, Hendrik Verwoerd, had set up a ten-year-long commission of inquiry into Native education before his party, the National Party, won the elections of 1948, and he promised while on the campaign trail that he would personally take charge of what would now be called Bantu education.

Responsibility for the education of Africans shifted from regional authorities and missionaries to a national ministry, which took charge of education policy. Related to this shift was a change in the expenditures on education, which were more clearly differentiated between allocations for Africans and those of European descent. Schooling was made compulsory and free for whites. For Africans beyond the primary phase, it was optional and at the cost of parents. The primary phase was to be conducted in the mother tongue and not English. The guiding policy now was called “separate development.” In a speech on the campaign trail Verwoerd outlined the philosophy of what would become the Bantu Education Act of 1953:

When I am Controller of Native Education I will reform it so that the natives will be taught from childhood to realize that equality with the European is not for them. What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? The Bantu child must be guided to serve his own community. There is no place for him in the European community above certain forms of labour. . . . For the Bantu there were always two choices: To discard everything Bantu in order to adopt Western civilization or to remain Bantu and uncivilized. That one might remain Bantu with the Bantu languages as the medium of civilization and that one’s whole community might in this way reach a higher spiritual social and economic level—that is to them an almost unbelievably novel idea.<sup>50</sup>

In 1953, coinciding with the passing of the Bantu Education Act, in the major journal of political theory at the time, *Theoria*, Eileen Janse Krige published “Some Aspects of the Educational Pattern of the Bantu.”<sup>51</sup> The interesting element about this article is not necessarily the particular argument it makes but its medium: that it was not published in the more conventional outlet at the time for this kind of argument, the ethnographic and anthropological journal. Knowledge of Bantu life was generally constituted as “ethno” knowledge: ethnography, ethnomusicology, ethnoreligion, and so on. Instead, Krige’s article appeared in a journal of political theory, where universal arguments are made. It was not directed therefore at anthropologists, many of whom we might say were already persuaded that the Native is different. It was critically responding to the political theorist who by deploying

universal categories argues that the Native can become an assimilated civilized being. Through her firsthand observational accounts of living at a frontier trading post over a six-month period, Krige describes how Bantu education is different from European education—both in process and aims. She argues that learning for the Native child is something that happens through a different process of socialization, not in the formal classroom space that Europeans consider necessary for education to take place. As she put it, “to the African education is life itself; it is the gradual formal induction of the individual into the social life from one stage of development to another.”<sup>52</sup> In short, she offers an argument for thinking about education as plural, an argument that could be read by some contemporary theorists today as an eloquent endorsement for local knowledge and Indigenous education.

A significant part of the African experience of colonial rule that renders Latin American decolonial theory limited when it comes to thinking the problem of colonialism is this account of colonial education. If one thinks of how settler colonialism in South Africa dealt with its problem in its apartheid phase, then thinking about the administration of difference through education is indispensable. To produce an account of the problem of colonialism in the present as one that includes assimilation *and* difference requires attention to these historically specific problems for colonial rule over time and across space.

### **Violence, Episteme, and Administration**

Part of the particularity, then, of the African genealogy of colonial rule, specifically but not limited to its Anglophone iterations, is the relationship between epistemology on the one hand and institutions of rule on the other, as well as the distinction between how to think the Native and how to rule the Natives. The latter is something of less importance in the Latin American present. Rather than ruling over the Natives, settler colonialism there more or less decimated the Natives. This might explain why the problem of colonial administration and its legacies does not appear as significant to interpret as a way to understand the present in decolonial theory. Mignolo, Grosfoguel, and Maldonado-Torres are strikingly silent about settler colonialism as such and prefer the more abstract and less historically specific notion of coloniality, perhaps because most of Latin America’s intellectuals and its anti-imperial critics, from Bolívar to Castro, are led by those who more likely trace their ancestry not to the largely decimated and now largely minoritized Indigenous but to European forebears. When, under Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s tenure of rule through the Workers’ Party in Brazil, the emphasis was put on the African heritage of populations, signaling the often unacknowledged predominance of European descendants in the elites of Latin American societies, this was an important symbolic difference from the norm.<sup>53</sup> Given this decimation both of bodies and of

ideas during the conquest phase of settler colonialism, later colonial rule in Latin America rarely had to grapple with how to *administer* Natives who could constitute a claim to being a political majority, and it did not need to administer difference other than as difference to be eradicated.

By contrast, the relationship between difference, law, and institutions of colonial rule is central to the historiography of the African experience. In this context a problem *for* colonial rule was how to manage the living Native population, which was a demographic majority. In these intersections of power, culture, and politics, fragmenting the Native population through enforced difference into multitudes of minorities became an answer. Difference had to be managed in ways that did not always seek to eradicate its existence; difference was cultivated toward colonial political ends. The Latin American experience is useful for making sense of how the colonial project thought the Other and how conquest and assimilation were rationalized—its epistemic violence. But it is less illuminating for understanding the shifting rationalities of nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial rule in Africa, as an account of colonial political order and rule through the administration of difference.

Expressed in a Foucauldian way of thinking about power, one could say that Latin American decolonial theory's notion of power remains repressive.<sup>54</sup> As a theory of domination and decimation it is insightful. But it is not as useful for thinking about the production of new political subjects as a mode through which colonial ambition worked. A theory of colonial conquest does give us a vivid sense of the repressive power of colonialism and its atrocities of extermination. It also gives us a historicized sense of the shift from the Other as a religious Other, occupying a different ontology of being (as we see in the debate at Valladolid in 1550–51 between Las Casas and Sepúlveda), to the Other as a racial subject, now constituted by social-evolutionary biological discourses of race (as we see in the accounts of the genocide of the Nama and Herero in German South West Africa).<sup>55</sup> But somewhat differently, the colonial technologies of rule that preoccupy colonial administrators who made their careers in Africa like Frederick Lugard,<sup>56</sup> Sir Theophilus Shepstone, and George Grey in colonial Natal, suggest how late colonialism was increasingly concerned with manufacturing new but differentiated political subjects, available for domination but not necessarily decimation.<sup>57</sup> These political subjects would neither be thought of as dispensable—as Native Americans often were—as mostly part of a civilizing mission, or as the French called it, *mission civilisatrice*. In the apartheid form of its colonial iteration, this late colonial manifestation was premised on the permanence of difference, the very basis of the policy of what apartheid theorists called “good neighborliness.”<sup>58</sup>

### An Anticolonialism of Difference

The more I read Grosfoguel's account of racism as deployed to think the problem of colonialism in the work of Serota and others, the more persuaded I am that we need an argument for a historically differentiated theorizing of the problem of colonialism. If colonality becomes the theoretical universalization of one account of the problem, then there is a likelihood that the claims of decoloniality to normatively offer what it calls "pluriversality" or "diversality"<sup>59</sup> will ironically render it victim to the problem it describes, rather than a sublimation of the problem it seeks to overcome.

Although he was mainly addressing a Southeast Asian audience, the works of the Chinese scholar Kuan Hsing Chen, in his reflections in *Asia as Method*, remains instructive for thinking differently about comparison. As he points out, "The historical processes of imperialization, colonization, and the cold war have become mutually entangled structures, which have shaped and conditioned both intellectual and popular knowledge production."<sup>60</sup> But, he wonders:

Why are such comparative analyses within the third world so rare—perhaps even non-existent? What needs to be done to facilitate this change in points of reference? Even if the desire and means to shift viewpoints exist, on what grounds is comparison possible and productive? Opportunities for Asians to get to know each other intellectually are often intercepted by the structural flow of desire toward North America.<sup>61</sup>

This remains very much the situation in Africa as well. The turn to Latin American decoloniality in a historically untranslated way makes the need for comparison all the more salient. In some of the current discourse inspired by the Latin American decolonial school, the problem with colonialism's legacy is identified as the imposition of European or Western knowledge on African subjects. But we should remember that the problem inherited by an anticolonial politics after apartheid and indirect rule is different. Apartheid education, for example, after 1948 was less about assimilation than it was about difference. This was no less an imposition of a European worldview, but it is also not identical to the epistemic violence that assimilationist experiences name as the problem of colonialism.

A comparative approach to thinking the problem of colonialism does not render differences inconsequential but rather considers them illuminating. It encourages thinking about colonial education as a political question with different answers at different conjunctures, just as colonial predicaments had different answers at different points in time in different parts of the world. To pluralize our account of the problem of colonialism in the present, as is suggested here, is not to dissolve or decenter the colonial question, nor is it to fragment it into so many historically ambiguous case studies of ambivalence. Rather, it would help



illuminate the concrete effects that colonial categories of rule have in the present in their very distinctive ways—whether they are defined as racial, gendered, ethnic, or religious.

The importance of the shift from assimilation to difference in the broader colonial political project has catastrophic effects that are ongoing. Those who live in its aftermaths inherit a colonial legacy that in its late iterations did not try to decimate difference but rather to reinscribe it—and to create it where it was absent, to amplify where it was present, and to fix it as permanent through law. One of the key theorists of indirect-rule colonialism, Frederick Lugard, the colonial administrator who, it is said, conjured modern Nigeria as a political entity, had warned of the danger of an assimilated class of Native subjects. But being a pragmatist rather than a dogmatic ideologue, Lugard responded, in a different colonial context, by founding and advocating for the University of Hong Kong during his tour of colonial duty there. In Nigeria, Lugard became a proponent of not imposing European ways on the Native subject and of figuring out how to unite a territory to be called “Nigeria” while securing colonial order by dividing: ethnicity in the South and religion in the North.<sup>62</sup>

The pioneering Nigerian historian Yusufu Bala Usman noted that the colonial reification of difference only enforces assimilation: the “colonial preoccupation with ‘restoration and rehabilitation of cultural heritage’ tends to reify culture, robbing it of historical dynamism,” and it “actually perpetuates the ethos of dependence which it is ostensibly intended to eliminate.”<sup>63</sup> Usman claimed that such an approach was marked by “three basic weaknesses”:

its ahistoricity; its transcendental definition of culture which makes culture peripheral and marginal; and its racialization and tribalization of culture. . . . When it is closely examined, it would be realized that it involves a denial of history and historical movement because culture is perceived as a given dimension of a people’s existence and not a product of historical existence and development with specificity for each epoch.<sup>64</sup>

Usman’s overarching preoccupation was the naturalization of ethnic categories as indigenous to a territory: Yorubaland for Yoruba, Hausaland for Hausas, Igbo Land for Igbos. Usman wanted to show, firstly, that these ethnic categories were neither primordial nor ancient but amalgamated and modern. Second, he wanted to show that territory and origin as coincidental categories, were the products of a colonial encounter—for him it was not origins but residency that should define political rights. By tribalizing territory, colonial rule and colonial knowledge rendered some minorities as permanently rightless because they were not Indigenous. The category of the Indigenous, so valorized in decoloniality studies and movements in Latin America and North America, is less readily available in Africa as that which

is “outside” of the colonial. This does not imply dismissing the subversive anticolonial resources available in that which preexisted colonialism. It is, however, to signal that the realm of tradition and culture, when it came to the Native in this African context, was rendered static and Other for colonial ends. Difference is not immediately the name of a decolonial identity but needs itself to be decolonized.

Read into this comparative account, apartheid and its education policy after 1948 is the colonial answer to a problem, not just in South Africa but across large swaths of the colonized world. It was an answer that shifted from assimilation to the permanence of difference. Bantu education did not seek to impose European ways of thinking or being on the Native subject, but it was the product of European knowledge and politics, and it generated an account of the Native suitable to the colonial predicament at that time. By that time, colonial administration did not want to force the Native to be European—it did not want to produce Macaulay’s famous “Indian [man] in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.”<sup>65</sup> Rather, it wanted to force the Native into the concept of one that colonial power wished him or her to be. Difference was the key. The creation of a differentiated university landscape enacted by the Extension of Universities Act of 1959 went along the grain of this venture: to create ethnicized institutions for Africans and racialized institutions for whites, Indians, and “coloreds.”

The challenge in much of Africa, marked by these colonial legacies in education, is one of decolonizing knowledge without reinscribing colonial conceptions of difference, while at the same time not subsuming difference into a placeless cosmopolitanism. Apartheid education answered the problem of colonialism by reinscribing difference in order to produce political subjects who internalized this difference as inferiority. The challenge for an anticolonial politics in educational transformation is threefold: firstly, how to write oneself out of an imperial concept of the universal that is in fact a particular? This is a challenge addressed to the colonial universals that are premised on Eurocentrism. But it should also be addressed to anticolonial “particulars,” like Latin American decolonial theory that travels via North America, presents the problem of colonialism in universal terms, and is embraced as such. Second, how to decolonize the concept and practice of difference itself, without surrendering it? That is to say, how to render it less a category of colonial ambition and more a category for the enactment of political plurality? And third, how to think comparatively across traditions of thought, histories of power and domination, and, most of all, political futures? We cannot simply think the world a better place through mere diversity in thought. It would be a dangerous hubris to conflate thinking the world differently with the political acts required to make the world different. But thinking differently is itself, in certain conditions, the starting point of political acts.

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### Notes

1. For example, it had inspired a movement in Oxford University in the United Kingdom. See Chaudhuri, "Real Meaning."
2. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*; Mantena, *Alibis of Empire*.
3. For two helpful accounts that do address these questions, see Naidoo, "Contemporary Student Politics"; Ahmed, "#RhodesMustFall."
4. Scott, "Temporality of Generations."
5. Said, "Traveling Theory."
6. Stuart Hall's rethinking of Marxism, via Gramsci, in relation to ethnicity and race, has also been instructive. See Hall, "New Ethnicities."
7. This genealogy is outlined in Grosfoguel, "Developmentalism."
8. De Lima Grecco and Schuster, *Decolonizing Global History*?
9. Cusicanqui, "*Ch'ixinakax utxiwa*."
10. I found very useful Ramos and Daly, *Decolonial Approaches*.
11. Mignolo, "Interview."
12. See, in particular, Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism."
13. *Guardian*, "Indigenous Children's Removal."
14. Grosfoguel, "Epistemic Decolonial Turn," 214.
15. Grosfoguel, "Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies," 4.
16. Grosfoguel, "Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies," 4.
17. Grosfoguel, "What Is Racism?," 10.
18. Grosfoguel, "What Is Racism?," 10.
19. Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni is now the professor and chair of epistemologies of the Global South with emphasis on Africa at the University of Bayreuth in Germany.
20. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Africa Decolonial Research Network."
21. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Africa Decolonial Research Network."
22. I have described these critical traditions of thought on political economy, race, and class in South Africa in Pillay, "Translating 'South Africa.'"
23. Some of these views can be found articulated in the following studies: Jansen, *Knowledge in the Blood*; Soudien, "Knowledge in the Blood?"; and the Ministerial Task Team report on

transformation in higher education in South Africa, also known as the Soudien Report: HESA, “Sector Position Paper.”

24. See Mamdani, “African Studies”; Ntsebeza, “Mafeje.”
25. Ratcatcher, “Apartheid and the Universities.”
26. Africa Check, “Factsheet.”
27. Ratcatcher, “Apartheid and the Universities.”
28. Some of the interventions in teaching history after apartheid are also described in Witz, Minkley, and Rassool, *Unsettled History*.
29. A case in point is the debate over the teaching of Africa at the University of Cape Town in 1998. See Pillay, “Affirmation of Academic Colonialism”; Mamdani, “Is African Studies?”
30. See Wallerstein, *Road to Independence*; Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment*; Amin, *Imperialism and Unequal Development*; Magubane, *Continuing Class Struggle*; Babu and Tandon, *The Debate*; Wolpe, *Articulation of Modes*.
31. Pillay, “Translating ‘South Africa.’”
32. Jhalley and Hall, *Race*.
33. Lalu, “South African History.”
34. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “African Decolonial Research Network.”
35. Nash, “The Moment of Western Marxism.” Gatsheni-Ndlovu’s narration of the Marxist tradition tends to flatten the debates on race and Marxism in South Africa and excludes the work of well known activist-intellectuals like Neville Alexander (*One Azania, One Nation*) and Rick Turner (*The Eye of the Needle*), both of whom tried to develop accounts of Marxism that incorporated less historicist accounts of colonialism, racism, and capitalism.
36. This point has been recently underscored when in early March 2021 the former vice chancellor of Witwatersrand University in South Africa, Adam Habib, found himself in a controversy surrounding his enunciation of the N-word in an online conversation with students at the London School of Oriental and African Studies, where he is the incoming director. Habib, who was the vice chancellor of Wits during the student uprisings in 2015–16, responded to the controversy caused by his enunciation on Twitter. “I don’t identify with this political tradition [of identity politics],” he said. “I grew up in a political tradition that is more cosmopolitan oriented and more focused on the class dimensions of structural problems.” In so doing Habib was reinscribing the choice between identity and class that some of the critics of academic Marxism in South Africa have been bemoaning. Habib, “I am aware.”
37. Grosfoguel, “Decolonizing Postcolonial Studies,” 2. Given that this is a critique leveled against North America–based decolonial scholars by some of their counterparts in Latin America, this line of critique is perplexing. So, too, is the additional critique he makes of postcolonial theorists—that they tend to be located in literature departments—since the same observation could be made about the main theorists of decoloniality: Maldonado-Torres is based at Rutgers University, Mignolo is based at Duke University, and Grosfoguel is based at the University of California, Berkeley—and all in literature or ethnic studies programs.
38. Grosfoguel, “Decolonizing Postcolonial Studies,” 2.
39. Grosfoguel, “Decolonizing Postcolonial Studies,” 12.
40. Diagne, *African Art as Philosophy*, 74.
41. Mignolo and Vasquez, “Colonial AestheSis.”
42. The major and most prolific scholar here has been the Zimbabwean historian Ndlovu-Gatsheni, now based in South Africa. See, among a number of his articles and books,

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Decoloniality as the Future.” A network of scholars has also been formed around the approach, the Africa Decolonial Research Network (ADERN).

43. Seroto, “Dynamics of Decoloniality,” 5.
44. Seroto, “Dynamics of Decoloniality,” 5.
45. Seroto, “Dynamics of Decoloniality,” 6.
46. Seroto, “Dynamics of Decoloniality,” 6.
47. Seroto, “Dynamics of Decoloniality,” 6.
48. As opposed to the French or Lusophone colonies, which tend for the most part to have a different account of colonial rule’s techniques. Although here, too, that distinction between British indirect rule and French and Portuguese assimilationist approaches is not one that holds throughout the history of French or Portuguese colonialism in Africa. Approaches to colonial rule changed as the problems for colonialism were changing. See for example Michael Crowder’s essay on French direct rule, “Indirect Rule.”
49. An exemplary figure of this generation is the figure of Solomon T. Plaatje, who wrote a moving account of the anxieties of this political subject as the shift from assimilation to difference began to find traction among settler political leaders. Plaatje was a court translator who befriended W. E. B. Du Bois and started a newspaper documenting Black life; he wrote a novel (*Mhudi*) and narrated the experiences of Black life in documentary form in the book *Native Life in South Africa* (1916). See Ndebele, “Foreword.”
50. Verwoerd, quoted in Johnson, “Education,” 219.
51. Krige, “Some Aspects,” 29.
52. Krige, “Some Aspects,” 29–30.
53. Saraiva, “New Africa.”
54. The distinction Foucault famously made between power as repressive and power as productive is outlined in Foucault, *Introduction*. It is fruitfully elaborated on in relation to techniques of governance in Deacon, “Strategies of Governance.”
55. The genealogy of categories of difference in various colonial projects as a defining feature of modernity is described in great detail by Mahmood Mamdani in his latest book, *Neither Settler nor Native*, especially chap. 1.
56. Lugard, *Dual Mandate*. See also Mantena, *Alibis of Empire*.
57. McClendon, “Man.”
58. As Verwoerd put it,  
Our policy is one which is called by an Afrikaans word “Apartheid.” And I’m afraid that has been misunderstood so often. It could just as easily, and, perhaps, much better be described as a policy of good neighborliness. Accepting that there are differences between people, and that while these differences exist, and you have to acknowledge them, at the same time you can live together, aid one another, but that can best be done when you act as good neighbors always do. (“Hendrik Verwoerd”)
59. Grosfoguel, “Towards a Decolonial.”
60. Chen, *Asia as Method*, 212.
61. Chen, *Asia as Method*, 212.
62. This account of Nigeria draws on Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture*.
63. Usman, *Beyond Fairy Tales*, 23–24.
64. Usman, *Beyond Fairy Tales*, 23–24.
65. Macaulay, “Minute.”

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